

Safety Alert: Wood Chippers



WARNING! *Fatal accidents can occur when using Wood Chippers*

The problem:

Over a nine year period, more than 39 workers across the U.S. were killed in accidents when using wood chippers.

- Most chipper fatalities occurred when workers were pulled into the machine.
- Some workers have been pushed into the machine when the worker was feeding a limb that had branches sticking out behind him.
- One out of three fatalities happened when a worker got hit by the chipper hood panel while the worker opened the hood when the blades were still rotating.

What you can do:

Work practices for feeding the chipper:

- Keep hands and feet outside the hopper at all times.
- Do not clear jams when the machine is operating or slowing down.
- Feed the trunk or “butt end” of branches into the hopper first.
- Never reach into the feed area.
- Stand to the side of the hopper, not directly in front.
- To feed small limbs, use a longer branch as a push stick. Do not use a shovel or other tool with a handle. Do not reach into the hopper to push twigs to the grinder.

Hopper should be designed to keep workers’ hands away from feed mechanism:

- The hopper bed should be long enough to keep workers’ hands away from blades.
- All rotating parts must be covered by a machine guard.
- Newer machines are equipped with emergency stop bars and feed control bars.

Work Practices for opening the chipper hood:

- Machine must be stopped before opening the hood guard.
- The knives must be completely stopped before opening the chipper hood.
- Hood guard must be securely latched before the machine is started up.
- Inspect the chipper hood for missing pins or cracked hinges before each use.
- Start the chipper at the lowest speed and listen for sounds of loose or broken parts.

Worker clothing:

- Do not wear loose clothing. Keep shirt sleeves buttoned and tuck in shirts.
- Do not wear gloves that have cuffs.
- Wear a hard hat and slip-resistant work shoes.
- Wear safety glasses with side shields.
- Wear hearing protection when chipper is shredding.

Worker training:

- Workers should be trained on the operation of the specific piece of equipment.
- Review the manufacturer’s owner’s manual.
- Train workers on proper start-up and shut-down.
- Train workers on proper feeding of the chipper and safety controls.
- Do not work alone.
- Operator of chipper must be older than 18 years of age. We recommend that all workers on site are also older than 18, since the history of chipper fatalities includes assistants who were younger than 18.

For more information: OSHA: “Hazards of Wood Chippers,” Publication SHIB 04-16-2008.
Workplace Safety for Municipal Employees: Massachusetts Workplace Safety and Health Program,
Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards, **617-969-7177**; **www.mass.gov/dols/mwshp**



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